

HERNDON TIMES (VA)
17 September 1986

Mrs. Pennino's odyssey

By CARLOS MONCADA
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The CIA, which has been accused of getting into everything, is in Martha Pennino's hair.

And she's been scratching her head trying to figure out why.

The Centreville supervisor has been drawn into a cloak-and-dagger drama involving mysterious federal government representatives, obscure plans for intelligence-gathering operations in Reston, and unusual security proposals that have left her baffled.

It all began four months ago, when she received a letter at her Vienna home requesting that a meeting be set up at her office to discuss, as she now recalls, "the location of a super-secret something or other."

The meeting never happened.

"They wanted me to sign a form saying that I would not discuss (what was said in the meeting)," Pennino recalled. "I said, 'I'm sorry, if it's that super-secret, I'd just as soon not sign this.'"

But it didn't end there.

Recently she was briefed by two federal representatives, who identified themselves only as "Mr. Brown" and "Mr. Adams," about government plans to set up an operation near Reston's planned Town Center.

After she was told about plans to erect a security fence around the proposed office complex, located on Sunset Hills

Road, Pennino bristled.

"I said, 'Wait a minute, this isn't in keeping with the concept of what we've got going in Reston,'" Pennino said. "We think of ourselves as an open community."

During the talks she pressed for answers on why a group that is proposing tight security would plan to set up shop adjacent to an area that is expected to become a bustling downtown core.

"I asked them, 'Why don't you move this operation down by the river near McLean, where you've got lots of space,'" said Pennino, alluding to the CIA's Langley headquarters.

The response, Pennino said, was "Oh, we're overcrowded down there."

In conceding that their Langley headquarters was cramped for space, Pennino said, the representatives unwittingly confirmed that a CIA operation was involved.

She quoted the representatives as saying at one point that the office complex "has internal features that are good for our operation."

"If that's the case, then it must have been built for them," Pennino said. "Why would an independent developer putting up a speculative building put in features that would be good for this operation?"

Pennino said that she offered to come up with more secluded sites in Reston for the operation. But she said that the representatives appeared determined to locate near the Town Center.

"I get a feeling that the federal government may have a lot more power than all of us put together and they're going to do what they want to do," Pennino said.